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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9044
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1999
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5476
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9070
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6646
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4459
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2452
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000320

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/28/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY: PROTESTS
POSSIBLE, BUT NOT PLANNED

REF: A. RANGOON 312

[1](#)B. RANGOON 314

Classified By: Political Officer Sean K. O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On May 28, police near Insein Prison arrested a solo protestor who unfurled a sign calling for Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) release. Authorities have increased the security presence in Rangoon to guard against mass protests. National League for Democracy (NLD) leaders told us the party has no plans to organize protests. They noted, however, that they cannot predict or control what Aung San Suu Kyi's many supporters may do, and the that party would "take a stand" if demonstrations break out.

[1](#)2. (C) NLD spokesman and ASSK attorney Nyan Win reported that ASSK is fatigued from the trial, but stressed that her general health is still good. The NLD issued a statement May 28 lamenting that ASSK did not have adequate time to consult with her attorneys and complaining about the disqualification of three defense witnesses (Ref A). NLD Central Executive Committee member Win Tin conducted a lengthy radio interview with the Democratic Voice of Burma summarizing what would have been his testimony; it will air in Burma this week. End Summary.

Solo Protestor Arrested

[1](#)3. (SBU) NLD Central Executive Committee member Win Tin confirmed to us that on the afternoon of May 28, police near Insein Prison quickly arrested a solo protestor who unfurled a sign calling for ASSK's release. In a May 29 meeting with Poloff, Win Tin said the 60-year-old protestor, U Zaw Nyunt, is not an NLD member and appears to have acted alone. Police have not revealed any information about U Zaw Nyunt's location or condition.

No NLD Plans for Protest, But Police on High Alert

¶4. (C) The Deputy Commander of Rangoon's Armed Police Battalion (charged with crowd control) told our Regional Security Officer that police have increased their presence throughout the city, allegedly in response to information the NLD will lead demonstrations on May 30. Win Tin told Poloff that the NLD has no plans to organize protests, but cautioned the party leadership cannot predict or control what ASSK's many supporters may do. Win Tin expressed concern authorities might respond aggressively if mass demonstrations break out, but said "if something does happen, we can't sit down." NLD official Han Thar Myint elaborated that, unlike the monk-led protests in 2007 in which the NLD played no role, the party's leadership would not be able to remain passive if pro-ASSK demonstrations broke out. "She is our leader, so we would have to take a stand," he said.

¶5. (C) Win Tin pointed out that he and a number of other NLD members have maintained a daily silent vigil near Insein prison since the trial began; they will resume the vigil on June 1 when court convenes to hear closing arguments (Ref B).

He told us that in addition, ASSK supporters from as far away as Mandalay and Chin State have traveled to Insein to show their support, and that local residents have provided him and others with food and water in a show of solidarity. Win Tin stated that while the NLD presence may be limited, the overall number of ASSK supporters present each day near the prison "is in the thousands." "Our presence is our protest," Win Tin said, "hopefully that will be enough." (Note: Consul has observed approximately 300 people who appear to be participating in the vigil each day of the

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trial, but the area is extremely crowded with other people conducting their daily business. End note.)

NLD Statement Laments Trial Procedures

¶6. (U) On May 28, the NLD issued a statement lamenting that ASSK did not have adequate time to consult with her attorneys during her trial. The statement also criticized the judges' decision to disqualify three of the four proposed defense witnesses, noting that all of the prosecution's 15 witnesses were permitted to testify. The statement concludes by asserting that by these actions, the GOB has violated the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its own law.

Win Tin's Testimony

¶7. (C) In his meeting with us, Win Tin also criticized the court's refusal to let him and NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo testify. He stated that he intended to serve as a character witness and would have testified to ASSK's integrity and patriotism. Denied that opportunity, Win Tin instead conducted a lengthy radio interview with the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) summarizing what would have been his testimony. DVB will air the interview in Burma over the next several days.

ASSK Tired But in Generally Good Health

¶8. (SBU) NLD spokesman and ASSK attorney Nyan Win told us May 29 that ASSK is fatigued from the trial, but stressed that her general health is still good. Nyan Win reported that on May 28, ASSK told him she was suffering stomach cramps that prevented her from getting a good night's sleep. She pointed out, however, that the chief medical officer at Insein prison was closely monitoring her health and has been very attentive. ASSK's legal team is expected to meet with their client on May 30 to discuss the case, at which time Nyan Win will inquire further about her health.

Comment

19. (C) While the NLD has told us it has no plans to demonstrate, as Win Tin cautioned and yesterday's solo protestor showed, there are individuals who are willing to take to the streets in support of ASSK. Moreover, the regime's show of force in places where people normally gather -- like Insein -- raises both tensions and the possibility that a spontaneous, unforeseen incident could spark protests as has happened in the past.

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